

DAY TO DAY PAMPHLETS

No. 27

CHALLENGE TO SCHOOLS

A pamphlet on
Public School Education

ARTHUR
CALDER-MARSHALL



J. H. A.

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ARTHUR
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION - - -	9
II. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BOYS: THE TRAINING OF SCHOOLMASTERS - - - - -	15
III. THE REAL NATURE OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM - - - - - -	25
IV. EXAMINATIONS AND THE ACADEMIC TYRANNY -	34
V. THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC AFFILIATIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS - - - - -	40

TO
A R A.

I

THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

“OF course, the boy must be educated.” It is an axiom. Yet what is the purpose of education? What is at the back of the mother’s mind? at the back of the father’s? What is the headmaster’s idea of the purpose of education? What do his assistants think their job consists in? What does the boy himself expect to get from school?

On examination, there proves to be a complex of motives and ideals in each case, a tangle the unravelling of which leaves one in a state of perplexed caution. There is no single answer, but a multitude. A mother unsatisfied by her husband may wish to produce in her son the qualities which his father lacks, the complementary potencies, sexual, practical, intellectual or emotional. Proud of her husband, she may desire his replica in her son, to give another woman the happiness she herself has experienced. Bullied, she may wish to rear a son to champion her rights; or frustrated, see him as the realizer of her own ambitions. She may want him to go to boarding school because he breaks in on her life with her husband; because she does not want him to know she has a lover; because she loves to have him near her, but is afraid he will become fixated on her; because she has to work for her living; or because every boy goes to boarding school.

The father may want the boy out of the way; or the boy may be the only tie between husband and wife, yet he is sent away to get the best education possible. Satisfied with himself the father may want his child to follow in his footsteps; or self-made, wish to give his son opportunities which he never had himself. It may be that he regards

a public school as a necessary evil, or as an educational system that cannot be bettered. He may look to his son to do all he has done himself or all that he has failed to do. A scholar, he may plan his son an athlete ; or vice versa. He may admire only the training of the body, or of the mind, or of the character. Or perhaps it's just that the boy has won a scholarship.

The process that ends in a boy entering a public school varies in each case. As great a difference exists among the masters with whom the boy will come in contact. In the course of his school career he will be subjected to some dozen to two dozen men, each with his own ideal of education. This ideal is usually an optimistic version of himself. His idea of a school will be formed by the school at which he was a boy, with modifications introduced by later experience. Whether his schooldays were happy or unhappy, the first school will be the model, even if only as the embodiment of all that he wishes to avoid. His scholastic ideas will centre round the subject in which he himself has specialized ; the mathematician thus considering mathematics supreme and the geographer geography. Apart from this natural bias, there might be unanimity of general aims, but there is not. Respectively masters look for and judge by, cleverness, intelligence, character, athletics, morality or piety according to their individual idiosyncrasies.

A high moral tone runs through masters' ideals. But connected with them and often antagonistic are the emotional demands which masters make on pupils. The ideals, however logical, fine and disinterested, are constantly being distorted by emotional factors, to which most teachers deny even recognition. The desires for power and admiration are magnified by the teacher's position on the dais, by his superiority in age and knowledge. The desire for power produces obsequiousness in pupils, suppressing independence in thought and action. Vanity favours "bumsucking," flattery. Latent homosexuality added may turn him into a strutting cock, a

bully, a voyeur, or a male coquette. The public intimacies of the classroom, with its curious unapprehended sexuality, may unconsciously destroy all the ideals which the master holds. He finds himself punishing boys in order to cover his attraction to them, pinching them to feel their buttocks, playing to them to raise a laugh ; fighting with every weapon at his command to break down stubbornness or independence in a boy who will not submit ; desperately forcing his opinions down his pupils' throats. His ideals crumble. He is in the grip of forces that he cannot master. Life in the classroom becomes the feverish working out of struggles taking place in his own soul. It is this that schoolmasters mean when they say that "teaching gets a grip on you." Too often it is a stranglehold.

A boy's natural desire is to become adult, to take on responsibilities which his elders withhold from him. This desire is seldom fostered ; is more often treated as wicked, foolish or ungrateful. Sometimes it dies ; fear of maturity takes its place. More often, it is sidetracked into purposes more immediately capable of realization. A boy of five knows what he will be when he grows up, fireman, engine driver or policeman. After puberty, he knows no more than that he is going to pass the Matric or get his colours. The immediate life of school enthral him. He produces for himself the situations that he needs : power or service ; love or dislike ; praise or blame from authority. His needs change from one term to the next. He may want to admire or be admired, to reverence or mock, win colours or prizes, create or procreate, to discover truth, make money, destroy, help the poor, convert the heathen, blaspheme, eliminate the incomprehensible by mastering knowledge or turning his back on it. He may be dwarfed by his brother or father, or fired by rivalry to outdo them. An infinitude of different feelings, for which as I point out later a number of outlets are provided.

Yet what common idea emerges from this complexity (which nevertheless is a simplification of the truth) ?

Solely the idea of equipment. The parent wants his son to be equipped. The master wishes to equip his pupil. And the boy desires to equip himself. How? and for what?

The aim of public schools, and by this I mean the Prospectus aim, the headmaster's, is a social one. The good of society (that is, society as constituted at present) and not the good of the individual is desiderated. I have never heard a schoolmaster ask whether the school was good for a certain boy. The statement that a boy is not good for the school is heard constantly. In the school community individuality is neglected and those qualities which contribute to that society fostered. This is regarded as right because paralleled by the individual's relation to society in later life. Men must be produced who will be socially useful; capable of commanding in subordinate positions; ambitious to leave the world a little better than they found it, but unwilling to criticize the basis of society; kind to animals, considerate, if condescending, to the lower classes; trained to stand up in buses and not to beat their wives, even if they want it; decent fellows, who follow Sport with intelligence, the Flag with loyalty and the Lord with reverence. Trustworthy in business, clean in habits, moderate in speech. Gentle, tolerant except with Bolsheviks, well-dressed subscribers to *Punch* and the Book Society.

That is the ideal, though it reads like a parody. It is luckily an impossibility. The ideal public school man never exists. What does exist, however, is a large class of men, who have not reached full growth, whose sensibilities are blunted; moderates alike incapable of strong love or hate. Muted individuals, whose mean is mediocrity. Rather puzzled, childish, hopeless but optimistic, men who individually are charming and pathetic, but who in mass are oppressive, formidable and ghastly, with their accumulated second-rateness and respectable repressions. They resemble those dwarf Japanese trees, the product of a century's tampering, their roots sedulously tapped,

boughs twisted and contorted with string, till they become for ever dwarfed, not too big for their pots. Little trees that can now be brought safely into the home. There is something tame and horrible about them ; so many with fine bodies and minds ; yet domesticated like doped lions in a circus ring or performing seals. The herring loses its balance and sense of direction, if deprived of its silver float. They have lost something similar, their self-reliance, their pivotal balance. They have to search round for pegs to hang themselves on. Having lost internal pride, they need externals, wealth, property, to compensate for their basic lack, counterbalancing sexual inadequacy with money potency. In their moderation is fear, not poise ; the trembling horror of the unequivocal. They compromise and slur issues in hope that in general fog their emotional insincerity will pass unnoticed.

The fundamental idea is that the interests of individual and society are mutually antagonistic. Are they ? Is it necessary to thwart the individual before he can be useful to society ? If it is, then society is evil ; and must be destroyed. But I neither believe that this is true, nor that the present thwarting of the individual is successful. Man's destructive desires can be utilized by society : the house-demolisher has his place, as well as the builder, the blaster of rock as well as its shaper. But when thwarted, the aggression of man, the very existence of which is often denied, begets war, the *enfant terrible* of modern civilization. For war, however much our most intelligent living writers may deny it in their comprehensive little symposia, is due to dammed-up aggression breaking out at last. The *Punch*-loving, tailwagging, helping-blind-men-across-streets-and-lame-dogs-over-stiles public school men can't stand it for ever. They have to go out and have a good prod with a bayonet once in a while. I can understand it. I don't blame them. They get credit for being patriots while war is on ; and later, when everybody realizes what a bloody mess it was, they can shift all blame to politicians, generals and armament firms.

I blame not them, but the mean lives they lead, which demands this periodic outlet. War is too high a price to pay for *Punch*. You stunt the individual to make society safe ; and then society must engineer a war for the stunted individual to give rein to anti-social desires under guise of heroism.

I believe that the social ideal of the public schools is pernicious. It does to the personality what bad shoes do to feet. It cramps, distorts and stunts, for a social ideal which it is incapable of realizing. To me the purpose of education should be to develop the personality in every possible direction. Not to stifle but encourage independence. Not to bring children to manhood in fear of the world, but prepared, eager and confident to take their place in adult life. To free the psyche of those inner terrors which make the dangers of the world things to be seized on avidly as confirmations of fear. To make men proud of their bodies and their sex rather than of their cricket averages or golf handicaps. To give them freedom from shame, letting them relax in the knowledge that their aggression will do no irreparable damage to themselves or other people, instead of attempting to bind them with inhibition and dominate them with their consciences ; to allow their minds the liberty of making or discovering their own truth rather than having one imposed from without.

In the following essays I have tried to analyse the present state of affairs and formulate specific as well as general methods of reform. I am conscious that these essays are in many ways inadequate and superficial. But I am certain of the rightness of their direction. Where I can see thus far, it is likely that there are others who will see further.

II

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BOYS : THE TRAINING OF SCHOOLMASTERS

WE are inclined to approach infantile life from an external instead of an internal angle. At birth, the child is helpless, incapable of fulfilling even primary needs of its own accord. Confronted by this impotence, adults assume that a vacuum exists, where they themselves have emotions. Knowing that a child is unable to have sexual connection, they deny the existence of its sex-life before the age of puberty and ignore the fact that babies not uncommonly enter the world as hanged men leave it, in a state of erection.

This is a fundamental error. It would be nearer truth to regard the emotional state of the child as what our own would be, if with our adult desires, we were reduced to a similar state of helpless ineffectiveness. It would be nearer truth, but not entirely true, because though the desires in each case are similar, the adult reduced to an infantile position has the further humiliation of being deprived of fulfilment he has known, while to the child that fulfilment is an ambition to be achieved as quickly and fully as possible.

During gestation, the embryo passes through all lower stages of biological development. Birth is the end of a rapid process of organic change as well as the beginning of a stage in which physical growth is slowed down while mental and emotional growth is accelerated. In the fifth month of womb-life the embryo more closely resembles a fish than a human being. It is a miracle that after this swift ascension of the biological ladder the delivered

embryo should have even the resemblance to human shape that it possesses at birth. It takes Wordsworth and the child-sentimentalists to outdo this miracle, with their idea of babies as "little angels." A newborn child has less in common with cherubs than with the most boorish Dogman of Darfur. Far from having forsaken the life of the genital organs for the feathered heights of Heaven, the child possesses a sex-life of extraordinary intensity, and one which has neither cognizance of nor respect for the Tables of Kindred and Affinity.

Mention of the Œdipus situation seems always to arouse antagonism. Perhaps the following statement of it will make it plainer, and less wilfully incestuous. The child's natural desire is to grow up, to become adult. On the other hand, the parents are all that the child knows of maturity. They represent the grown-up world. It is therefore the simplest and most natural thing that the male child's desire to grow up should take the form of wishing to do what his father does, to usurp his place and bear to his mother the relation that his father does. That the situation is incapable of realization does not weaken—rather strengthens—the fantasy. War ensues, in which the child will use every weapon at its command to separate his mother from his father and gain her for himself. From the beginning, the father is the son's first rival. This rivalry often persists through the school career into adult life as a war waged with equal intensity on both sides.

It is not my purpose to follow out different possible courses of development in boys. It is enough to provide as indication of the number of potential reactions, four crude responses to the primary Œdipus situation. Four boys, A, B, C and D, are placed in identical circumstances. The incestuous desires of A are diverted from his mother to his nurse, his sister, or the little girl next door. He is not checked in these directions. He exerts himself in doing things which will excite feminine admiration and fear—suitable substitutes for the sexual potency he lacks.

He grows courageous, athletic and practical. B, on the contrary, does not turn to other objects of love. His curiosity is fixed on his parents' love-act. He wants to see them in bed and know what they do. That knowledge is forbidden knowledge. Instead he directs his curiosity to a multitude of other things. He is one of those children who are always asking questions. Perhaps his desire for knowledge is genuine. Perhaps he does not listen to the answers at all. He learns to spell, read and write at an early age. His appetite for knowledge is insatiable, because he cannot learn the thing he wants to know above all others. C is stricken with guilt on account of his incestuous ideas. All activity, whether mental or physical, symbolizes to him a challenge of his father, the expression of his own illicit impulse. He refuses to learn and he slows down his mental development in every way he can. At school, he is definitely backward. He possibly suffers from inattention and psychological deafness. D is determined to have his mother one way or another. Without his father's armoury, he fights with his own weapon, weakness. He proves difficult to wean and develops illnesses as soon as his mother tries to leave him. He demands constant attention: and if he gets it, he will probably spend his schooldays in the sanatorium of one school after another.

The first five or six years of a child's life are the most important for the formation of character. After them, the "latency" period sets in, a period of germination which ends in the sprouting of adolescence. The four boys A, B, C and D, whose primary reactions I outlined above, are all capable of developing in very different ways, according to the treatment given to them by parents. But whatever that treatment, it must be remembered that the major good, or the major harm, will have been done several years before the boy enters public school: even though that harm or good may not manifest itself at all fully till after puberty. The public school therefore frequently receives the praise or blame due to the parents

themselves. Many people who blame their school for their unhappiness at puberty should in reality censure themselves and their parents. Correspondingly, they should devote more of their love for the Alma Mater to the mother herself.

Parents think that by sending their sons to school, they avoid the incubus of education. They do not. Unless and until children are permanently transferred to crèches, they will receive their most important training at home. And, while parents remain in a state of ignorance, hung between intuitive and conscious understanding of their children, the education of the adolescent will remain a problem of unnecessary complexity.

The worst error of parents is not to leave them alone. They must fuss, either trying to prevent the child from growing up, or forcing it to grow up. Both attitudes are selfish. Everyone knows the awful, "But they're so sweet, when they're babies," the free indulgence of paternal and maternal feeling. But, selfishness apart, these attitudes spring from unconscious jealousy (the "forcing up" being an over-determined counteraction of this motive, achieving the same results). This jealousy arises at the challenge levelled by the growth of children and their eagerness to assume responsibility. It is the fear of being "put on the shelf": the master builder's hatred of "the younger generation knocking at the door": or again, the fantasy of Mickey Mouse, destroyed and overwhelmed by the huge litter which the polyphiloprogenitive Minnie bears him. Within the child, there are enough frustrations in the path of maturity to make their reinforcement by the parents a criminal act. The jealousy of the parent should not unite with the child's fear and guilt to produce that Peter Pandom which is the pride and curse of modern England.

The most important reformation needed in modern education is in the attitude of parents, especially during the early, formative years, when their influence is paramount. But that is outside the scope of these essays.

What must be dealt with is fact, the fact with which the schoolmaster is faced ; what he does and what he could do.

He receives a multitude of boys, coming from different homes, with different histories ; boys who have in varying degrees and ways succeeded in effecting some sort of adjustment. He has to equip them to the best of his ability. What are his qualifications for doing so ?

He has been to a public school himself. He has some knowledge of similar conditions, stored in memory. His own thoughtfulness will determine the extent to which he has benefited by his knowledge of himself and other boys he knew at school. His sympathy will decide the extent to which he can apply that knowledge. His sympathy depends on his freedom from personal anxiety, his emotional detachment.

After school, he has gone to a university, probably Oxford or Cambridge. These two universities especially are cut off from the world. Their values are values prevailing nowhere else. Repression, snobbery and fantastic idealism flourish there. The atmosphere of immaturity is rank. The Buchmanite movement shows the unbalanced form that even its attempts at sincerity take. The whole is a fantasy world, cut off from the real world.

Straight from the university, he returns to school, where he earns a salary. A more real scale of values obtains. But it is, in fact, the old, puerile scale. He has swung back to boyhood. His knowledge of the outside world is negligible. If he has any, it is theoretical. His life is isolated but fairly easy. It puts no strain on his intellect. Above all, it brings him in a regular, if small, income.

Examine this from the sexual point of view. He has spent his life, probably from the age of seven, in monastic, or homosexual institutions, whichever you prefer to call them. His sexual knowledge is almost entirely theoretical, his curiosity puerile and his experience limited to sordid passages with amateur or professional prostitutes. The

sexual morality of his school and university are medieval, cruel and repressive: and however free he may be intellectually, his emotions are not emancipated. Returning to school, he is plunged again into an atmosphere more rigid and determinedly homosexual than his university's. Denied any homosexual outlet, he lapses into hypocritical puritanism, laced perhaps with occasional whorings during week-ends and vacations. These casual, heterosexual interludes are unsatisfactory, and do little to counterbalance the homosexual diversion of his sexual instinct. In the same way as Shakespeare's passion for the Dark Lady of the Sonnets was the complement of his love for the man, W. H., the schoolmaster's whoremongering makes possible his ideal love for one or more of his pupils. In the majority of schoolmasters, the homosexual relation they bear to their boys is not overt. Most, I believe, admit it to themselves; but very few do so to anyone else. It is there, nevertheless, informing their thought, actions and speech, ninety per cent. of which centre on boys.

I do not wish to say that the majority of schoolmasters are practising homosexuals. That would be libellous and untrue. What I do mean is that with their seclusion, the homosexual side of most teachers becomes over-developed and they tend to lose that detachment which is essential for good teaching. They are maladjusted, and whatever their pretences to the contrary, basically unhappy. After a time, their problems become too much for them and they lose pivotal balance. Their classrooms become the stage for petty emotional displays, which have tremendous significance for themselves, but merely retard the progress of the pupils.

This state of affairs partially arises from the fact that schoolmasters are not encouraged to marry. Their pay is not sufficient; and it is felt that a married man will not give as much of his time to out-of-school activities as a bachelor. At the moment, the system of payment in the majority of boarding schools, is according to the

Burnham Scale.* The provincial Burnham Scale recommends the minimum of £240 p.a. (from which 5 per cent. is docked for superannuation). This mounts by yearly increments of £15 after the first two years, until the maximum of £500-£600 p.a. is finally reached. This is subject to criticism from two points of view. Firstly the salary graph does not correspond with the graph of teaching efficiency. It is generally admitted that a schoolmaster's teaching ability rises for the first five years, then, having reached its maximum, continues level for three or four years, after which it begins to decline. As a result of this, the heavy-salaried men become an all-round liability it being obviously better to have two, young, eager and up-to-date men rather than one inefficient, middle-aged man at twice the salary. Secondly, the low initial salary makes early marriage impossible. From his salary is deducted a sum varying between seventy and ninety pounds a year for board and lodging. That is to say, he is charged between £2 and £2 10s. a week for accommodation which is primitive, unpleasant and which cannot cost the school itself more than half that amount. His actual salary, therefore, is £150-£170 p.a.

The segregation of most schools from towns—in order to avoid the combined contamination of sex and epidemics—makes a car if not a primary, at least a secondary, necessity for a schoolmaster. Otherwise, he is confined entirely to the company of his colleagues, their wives, and his pupils, company which is neither fresh, nor stimulating. The running of a car, incidental expenses, drinks and tobacco and the necessary books to keep him up to date with his subject make it difficult for him to save money towards marriage; even if, like most young schoolmasters, he spends most of his vacations at home. Thus, when marriage comes, it means not only the sacrifice of the car, but of practically every small amenity of life.

* The larger and better known public schools pay considerably higher salaries than this; and it is to this fact rather than to the choice they thus command of raw material, that their educational superiority is due.

And there are few women, except those desperate for the marital state, who are prepared to share the isolation of a public school existence.

The smallness of salaries postpones marriage often so late that the homosexual tendency is firmly established and marriage is contracted either as a blind or an attempt at cure.

It is clear that the scale of payment should be drastically revised, so that men can marry at an earlier age. The humanizing influence of women is considerable on boys and masters alike. A good matron or a sympathetic master's wife exerts unconsciously (standing as she does *in loco matris*) a power over the emotional life of a school far greater than any master can : a power often out of all proportion to her merits, produced by those chivalrous, admiring adolescent emotions, for which boys find no other outlet in a boarding school.

So far from impairing a master's efficiency, I am sure that the establishment of a good, normal sexual relation improves it. It gives him detachment, relieves him from the desire to impose opinions on or draw emotions from his pupils. It gives him a life apart from the school, something to prevent him from becoming engulfed in his job. If the relationship has a strong, physical basis, it will extend his sympathy, knowledge and understanding. A man to whom sex is a delight, a matter of laughter and deep feeling, a man who has given himself fully to a woman, cannot have truck with that magnification of petty faults which is the curse of the repressed teacher. He loses external vanity to internal pride and is freed of the anxieties that interrupt his teaching. Most " scenes " in schools happen at about three-quarters through term, at a time when the nerves and tempers of the staff are becoming frayed, and the sense of proportion has been lost. These scenes are engineered by masters, who, starved of emotion, fulfil themselves vicariously by repressing the emotions of their pupils. They delight in exploring peccadilloes, exposing each shame and then

covering their enjoyment by the display of moral indignation. Called on to give aid, they are themselves the more in need of help. Only the balanced, sexually fulfilled man will find it unnecessary to compensate for his own frailty by the rectitude of his moral judgment of others.

A happily married master is better equipped than a bachelor to deal with boys. But he is still deficient in two respects. If he has deep self-knowledge, he will have intuitively some understanding of the problems which his various pupils encounter. But among schoolmasters goodwill is the common substitute for self-knowledge. The balanced master will not hinder; but if he has no more than balance he cannot help. If he is to help, a master must have some knowledge of unconscious processes. He must realize that he incurs the aggression, love and respect that a boy feels for his father, that he is truly "*in loco parentis*." He must have some acquaintance with the psychological causes of inattention, the inability to master particular subjects, and the types of aggression and guilt found in "normal" boys.

The examiners for the Teacher's Diploma have realized this necessity and prescribed a course of psychology. Unfortunately, the psychology prescribed is the academic, enumerative MacDougal brand, which has no more contact with the human psyche than Adam Smith's Economic Man had with the working, earning, spending creatures of whom it was supposed to be an analysis. The excellent intention has worse than defeated itself, by demanding the study of common-nonsensical poppycock instead of clinical psychology, scientifically established. It may be argued that the expense of equipping every master with psychological knowledge would be considerable. It certainly would take time. But a start might well be made, by psycho-analysing the component members of the Headmasters' Conference.

Apart from this lack of psychological knowledge, schoolmasters have no knowledge of the outside world. They have led sheltered lives; have no idea of conditions

obtaining in spheres outside their immediate family and academic circle, and cannot feel, except by imagination, the grind of poverty, the hopelessness of unemployment, the prevailing injustice and inequality as well as the occasional miracle of generosity, kindness and loyalty. Most masters are phenomenalists. Things are to them, what they seem to be. Simple, naïve, secure, they do not appreciate the variety of existence, but persist with ignorant, self-confidence in trusting outworn, but comfortable ideas, the refutation of which would at the same time cause them deep uneasiness and make them alive to the world in which they live.

To counteract this, there should be a lapse of at least two years between the end of university training and the beginning of teaching, years during which each one should earn his living in some other way. It may be objected that in that case, the teaching profession would be recruited entirely from the failures of other professions. But I would quote against that, the popular story of the new master entering the common room for the first time and being greeted by "Well, and what did *you* fail in?" There would be, I am sure, no fewer men than there are now, who enter the profession from an actual vocational sense: and I suspect there would be more, and those with a wider outlook, a sense of the gravity of the task before them, greater humility before its difficulty, yet with a finer knowledge and more humour with which to tackle it.

III

THE REAL NATURE OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

THE objection that I have to the majority of "progressive" educational systems is that their basis is *a priori*. Their fundamental premisses are theoretical and naïve. All boys, from being limbs of Satan, become little angels. Their evil tendencies are denied as strenuously as were formerly their good ones. While yesterday their expressions of independence as well as the demonstration of their aggression used to be regarded as wilful naughtiness, to-day true wilful naughtiness, intended by the child to provoke punishment and thereby mitigate internal guilt, is ignored. The child is thus as thwarted in one direction as formerly it was in another.

The public school system is different. It is a natural growth; and one that is very interesting to study. Upholders of the public school system must be discounted. They are its worst enemies. They claim for it ennobling qualities which it is its merit not to possess. They overlay with idealistic cant the realistic psychological principles according to which it has evolved. The system is in fact an example in modern England of a state of society analogous to those found in savage communities. Its study is more suited to a psychological anthropologist like Theodore Reik than to an academic educationist. Opponents of the system have often attacked it on these very grounds: whereas, in fact, these are the surest grounds for its defence. The peculiar rites and customs have arisen from no theory, but from the basic needs of adolescent boys. To a civilized adult, they appear as crude and barbarous as the practice

of the "couvade" or the system of tabu. Hence the ætiological myths, produced by those old boys who found the customs good, the public school cant attempting to explain rituals, the true origin of which has been lost, or rather was never consciously known.

I myself was educated at a day school. There were two small boarding houses, each containing some thirty boys. My first five years I was a day boy; my last two I was a boarder. It was a good school and I was happy there. When I was unhappy I know that the causes for unhappiness lay in myself rather than in objective circumstances. At the age of thirteen—for me, as I believe for most boys, a period when the sexual instinct took a masochistic form—I remember regretting that I was not at a boarding school. The day school lacked "customs." Notably it lacked a fagging system. At this time, I wanted to be a fag, the servant or slave of an older boy. It was a favourite fantasy. Perhaps if I had been a fag my resentment would have exceeded my desire for servitude. But as it was, I secretly regretted not being a fag as much as I openly congratulated myself.

At eighteen, when I myself had a fag, I remember envying prefects at Haileybury for their system according to which you had only to clap your hands in an oriental manner and all the fags within hearing came running up, some dressed, some half-dressed, others completely naked. The last to arrive had to perform the duty. I observed no resentment or humiliation on the fags' faces. It was more like a game, such as catch-as-catch-can or let's-put-Betty-in-Coventry; rather infantile, but with a deep psychological significance.

I do not believe that at thirteen, I was abnormally masochistic, or at eighteen exceptionally sadistic. I think it more likely that both these stages are normal in the life of adolescent boys, and that the fagging system was invented to fulfil this need.

My experience as schoolmaster confirms this. I often tried to encourage criticism of what seemed to me the more

foolish customs of the school. But I found that while I could get certain boys to criticize, even to laugh, any suggestion of reform met with obstinate resistance. Schoolboys themselves are the most resolute guardians of the system. It was evolved by them ; and it persists because of their sponsorship, not because of that of masters.

Specific customs of schools provide an extraordinary variety of emotional mechanisms. Apart from fagging, there is the speech tabu system, whereby certain boys are not allowed to speak openly to other boys, a factor which gives the same passion to a homosexual love-affair as the Spanish achieve in courtship, by means of barred windows and the seclusion of women. There are precedence rituals, sumptuary laws and a hundred and one other customs foreign to English adult life, but common enough in other, more dramatic civilizations.

The custom most criticized is that of flogging. The controversy usually centres on whether or not this custom is sadistic. To my mind, there is no doubt that the basic motive of flogging is sadistic. But that does not seem to me to provide a condemnation of the practice. If flogging is abolished, it does not abolish sadism. Sadism will find some other outlet, as indeed it does at schools, when those boys, whose sadism is not licensed by their being given power to flog, express it through the illegitimate means of bullying.

It must also be remembered that a sadist needs a masochist as a complement. Boys, who are always coming up for being beaten, are " asking for it " ; they want to be beaten ; just as certain boys are made to be bullied. While such " folies à deux " exist, and in fact provide the basis for the majority of marriages, it is ridiculous to criticize their manifestations, while doing nothing about their motivation. The public schools, because they legitimize and admit the existence of this sadism, are acting more wisely than those who think they can annihilate sadism by denying it outlet. The only way

to avoid the necessity for whipping is to provide other and more constructive channels for the expression of sadism. That this can be done I will try to⁶ show at the end of this essay.

For the moment I wish to make clear that the realistic public school system, with its barbarities, its compulsions which offer alternatives of acceptance or rejection, its social regulations affording opportunities of criticism as well as sponsorship, the *cursus honorum* which those who wish may compete for and those who do not, despise ; this system provides within its frame means of extraordinary diversity for boys to express and work through their predominant needs. It is true that opportunities are unfair, chances unequal and justice frequently unjust. It must be admitted that success is frequently undeserved, force is superior to right and goodness the mask for evil. But this is what happens in the world outside. Its small world contains as much diversity, inequality, happiness and misery as the adult world for which it claims to be the preparation.

But while the opportunities for the expression of psychological needs are almost perfect, no attempt is made to canalize them to a useful purpose. The personnel of a school is similar to the outside world : and so long as it remains similar, the outside world will remain as hopeless, sordid and ill-directed as it is at the present time.

The fundamental attitude of the public schools is capitalistic and conservative. They came into being in response to the need experienced in the nineteenth century for educational centres to qualify the sons of middle and upper class people for the professions, the civil and military services and later, for those branches of commerce and industry demanding technical training. They provided the children of those who had superiority in wealth with the knowledge and ideals necessary to retain and increase that wealth. It supplied the personnel

of administration both at home and in the empire. With its educational failures, it swelled the ranks of the Church Militant and Somnolent.

But to-day things have changed. A new type of individual is necessary, a type more capable of adjusting himself to new conditions, more alive in every way. Uncritical acceptance of society made for the solidity of English life : to-day it makes instead for chaos, by trying to apply a formula that is out of date. The old type cannot persist as before. It must develop in one of two ways, towards Fascism or towards Communism.

I do not sympathize with political education in any partisan sense. I believe that Communism is the only solution of the problems before us. But when I was a schoolmaster I considered it an essential part of my job to argue and present capitalist and socialist positions also. I knew that no unthinking acceptance of any programme was of the slightest value either to the holder or his party. I carried this impartiality to such a length that my pupils were upset. They demanded to know what I thought ; until I pointed out that I was not there for that purpose, but to find out what they thought.

But though I disbelieve in partisan instruction, I am strongly in favour of boys being made cognisant of political issues of the day in their broadest sense. I disapprove of the censorship exercised on political literature. Liberty of thought is discouraged. The intolerance of the *Daily Worker* is banned ; but the *Morning Post* has free access. The writings of Baldwin are put in the library, those of Lenin and Trotsky excluded. Liberalism is tolerated because it is capitalistic. The milder forms of Socialism are derisively allowed. But anything more Left than that is rigorously suppressed.*

* Victor Gollancz and D. C. Somervell give an interesting account of the suppressive measures taken against socialist and pacifist views, at the school at which they were both masters, in *Political Education in Schools*. They found the same results in attempting free political teaching as I encountered in connection with modern literature, here outlined. Lest it be thought that the dismissal of Messrs. Gollancz and

This censorship is not merely political. It is sexual, religious, moral and æsthetic. It involves all that is most alive in contemporary thought and writing. An example of this. At one school where I taught, I found that the boys read little but thrillers. They knew nothing of literature. I remembered that my own approach to painting had been through the Post-Impressionists to the Old Masters, and to music through Stravinsky to Beethoven. I understood the modern idiom with greater ease than the older. I thought they might find in modern literature a *rapproch* which they had not in accepted classics. I let them use my library. I lent them Lawrence, Faulkner, Hemingway, Tully, Huxley, Graves, Sassoon, Eliot, Campbell, Auden and Spender. Starting with one, my borrowers increased to over forty in the course of a year. They understood these books because they were about the world and time in which they lived. Their point of departure was the same. Literature came to have contact with life instead of being associated with the escapist whimsicality of Lamb (with whom, however, they had more sympathy after I had read them the famous "party" passage from Haydon's Autobiography). They became critical, able to distinguish between good and bad writing, false and true emotions. They began to discuss, dissent and have enthusiasms. They went back to the Russians, Flaubert, the eighteenth-century novelists, Donne, Shakespeare and Blake. It was a fascinating work watching and helping their mental freedom, one which rewarded the waste of many hours which could have been devoted to reading and writing. It was worth it, if only to see the captain of football poring over *Crime and Punishment*.

But it was too good to last. It aroused too much

Somervell was due to war-hysteria, let it be noted that in June of this year, two Old Boys were asked to sign an extraordinary document and forbidden to revisit the school, because they had given some pacifist pamphlets to a schoolboy aged eighteen. The schoolboy himself was sent home and only received back on promising never to do such a thing again.

unconscious jealousy among other members of the staff : jealousy which started with jokes against me and slighting references to " my boys " and ended with complaints to the headmaster. The headmaster had me up and said that I was undermining the boys with " The New Morality." He forbade me to lend books in future. When I pressed him to state what books he thought would undermine the morality of boys, he could give only one example, *High Wind in Jamaica*, by Richard Hughes. He explained that it was " an account of the sexual relation of children to sailors," and while he thought that it was a very clever book, he would not allow any boy to read it before he left school. I had to admit myself beaten and I left him, without telling him that it had been in the junior library for the last two years.

Lest it be considered that this school was exceptional in this respect, I must add that the headmaster told me that he raised the question at the next Headmasters' Conference and his decision was endorsed.*

This attitude is doubly pernicious. Politically it allows only one side to state its opinion. It tries to inculcate the interests of the propertied class, by positive propaganda on the one hand, and the suppression of conflicting

* A friend, himself a schoolmaster, to whom I have shown this pamphlet, criticizes the fact that I have ignored the question of religion in schools, and given to politics an importance that they certainly do not have in the minds of boys. He is right that the first abstract subject in which a boy is interested in is the existence and nature of God. This is because the subject is not really abstract. God stands for the good father ; and the need for a heavenly father is due usually to the frailty of the earthly one. I have not dealt with religion because I do not think it should enter into teaching. The chapel should be optional ; religion there for those who need it. But it should not be compulsory : compulsory religion produces Satanists, people who rejecting the Church, reject good also, and become worshippers of evil.

Religion therefore in a school should exist demurely, a matter of belief, discussion, study and comparison ; a personal thing which no master should go out of his way to tamper with.

The franchise in the civitas Dei is optional : in the civitas mundi it is compulsory. It is for that reason that I have laid stress on secular subjects. The full training of the individual involves training for citizenship.—A.C.M.

opinion on the other. It furthermore cuts boys off from all contemporary sources of knowledge and culture, in the fear that the Christian-capitalist fabric which it is the interest of these schools to support, will collapse under the attack of live criticism. If this wilful retention of boys in ignorance is successful, it produces true-blue, copper-bottomed blockheads. If it fails, it succeeds at least in retarding mental development for the period of five years and produces the Gilbertian situation that a public school is a place to which boys are sent as much not to learn certain groups of ideas as to be taught others.

I am less cynical. To me, the schoolmaster's duty is to place in the hands of his pupils what is finest in literature, thought or the arts. To make them familiar with modern political and economic problems and conditions. To present not one, but every side of a question. To spare nothing that will stimulate mind or imagination, and to be prepared without shame or prejudice to discuss any subject in which the curiosity of a pupil is aroused.

In this mental liberation, the sexual tensions which issue in flogging and bullying will be sublimated towards knowledge. A boy will attack a problem rather than Jones Minor, and flagellate falsehood instead of his fag.

The above, however, is only one of many means of turning aggressive, destructive and even sadistic energy to useful ends. It is suitable for sixth form boys and only the more intellectual among them. Sports and the equal fighting of boy and boy are always good ; but there are many other outlets which are seldom or never used in schools.

In England, public school boys are physically better developed and practically more incompetent than other boys. The condition of their sports is that they should be useless : useful physical effort is rather despised, regarded as common. (Note how a sportsman's status declines when he has to depend on his sport for his income.) In a school there are a large number of jobs to be done, that are not done because of expense ; the clearing of

waste ground, digging bathing pools, levelling tennis courts, the erection of minor buildings. There is the decoration of common rooms, studies and cubicles; the making and painting of furniture. And if the school has land, haymaking, rolling, raking, ploughing and sowing.

These activities, supplementing sport, carpentry and metalworking, would at the same time extend a boy's usefulness and his range of emotional expression. Digging, chopping and sawing have a very similar motivation to beating. But in addition, they are man's work, and the sooner a boy learns that he is capable of doing man's work, the better for his pride and reliance.

IV

EXAMINATIONS AND THE ACADEMIC TYRANNY

THE usual objection raised to the examination system is that it is an unfair test of the examinee. Conditions are abnormal; and more suitable to certain temperaments than others. Some boys are overcome with panic, who in normal conditions would distinguish themselves. One schoolfellow of mine, a boy who was always above me in term work, regularly established his *ægrotat* by being sick over his papers and then fainting. Psychological reactions of this sort, I should imagine, are connected with some early guilt of exhibitionism. It is at least correct that the exhibitionist is the most brilliant examinee.

Abnormality of conditions apart, the test itself is superficial. University Finals are the most exhaustive examinations in any curriculum. Yet it is ridiculous that the study of two years should be gauged by a ten days' examination; and that memory and speed should thus become the chief criteria of knowledge.

The forms that ability may take are multiple. A man's skill may be manipulative, authoritative, planning, organizing, intellectual, intuitive or creative. But a written examination can only test certain of the organizing and intellectual faculties, and these in a very limited degree.

These criticisms are just and generally admitted. Yet the importance laid on examinations remains great, because it is the only way discovered of judging ability. Personal knowledge is, of course, a better test than any

papers ; but it is difficult to achieve impartiality in that way. The headmaster wishes to consider his scholars better than those of other schools ; while the form master cannot resist the indirect self-praise of his teaching ability involved in praising his pupils. A viva voce examination gives intuitive examiners the best medium of judgment. But unfortunately examiners are not chosen for their intuitive powers.

At the moment, however, I am not concerned with the question of the existence of the examination system, but with the effects that it has on school curricula. There are many schools, public schools, in which the Matriculation or its equivalent is the whole purpose of education.* This is deplored and strongly contested by headmasters, who know that to make the Matriculation synonymous with Education is to abandon every ideal that education can propose. It is the fault almost entirely of parents, who imbue that opinion in their sons and take them from school as soon as that examination is passed. That is the end of their schooling. They are now ready to enter the office with a certificate and an Old School tie, two symbols of which it is difficult to decide the emptier. The education in such schools is nothing better than a crammer's establishment with trimmings.

But though this constitutes a problem in itself, I propose to leave it on one side and concern myself with those public schools where boys can take the examination in their stride. It must be remembered that the influence exerted by examinations in these schools must be magnified many times to apply to "hack" public schools.

The demand of examiners is for factual knowledge. And the demand is reasonable in subjects such as the natural sciences and mathematics, where theoretical work only begins at a late stage. But in the humane studies, the classics, history, modern languages and even geography (which last should not be dissociated from

* At the time of going to press, Northern Universities are making an effort to abolish this.

modern politics) fact is not, and cannot be, the most important element in their comprehension.

The study of the classics since the Renaissance has degenerated from the study of what was then the sum total of secular knowledge to a dry, antiquarian and philological exercise. This method of regarding the classics is due partly to the supersession of the classics as a source of knowledge, but even more to the demands of examiners for fact. What is necessary is to know the uses of *ut* and the syntax of indirect speech. The Romans and Greeks, their life and literature, what agitated their minds, their thought, their way of life and the qualities they sought, these are of no worth next *ut* and the accusative and infinitive ; because they are not demanded in an examination. Quite automatically, the value is impressed on boys that what is most important is what is required in the examination ; grammar and exercises. Intelligence, understanding of and sympathy with the people whose language they are studying is written down as unnecessary and unimportant, the sort of play to beguile the end of a long period.

Thus a curriculum, already narrowed by time, is made narrower by examiners, who make it possible for a boy of average memory to pass the Matriculation Examination, even to get a scholarship at Oxford or Cambridge, without the exercise of his own brain. It is not only possible ; it is the easiest way to pass examinations.

An example. Supposing that the study of classics must be reduced to the study of grammar and syntax, there are still two ways to teach and learn. By rote or by intelligence. A textbook such as North and Hillard states rules at the head of each section, rules which, if got by heart and accurately applied, will achieve the results necessary for examination success. But these rules are in fact not rules, but part of a logical system of thought. The intelligent approach to grammar is to trace the reason why constructions exist. Given the reason, one can appreciate the construction with ease. The basis of

knowledge in this case is solid: it is approached by intellect, instead of memory.

I do not say that boys prefer this method. Ninety-nine per cent. prefer rules of thumb, which evitate need for thought. But that is a bad quality in boys, which examiners foster instead of discouraging.

A further example of the narrowness of teaching grammar and syntax. In the study of a word's meanings lies embedded the thought and attitude of a people. In Greek, for example, the word ἀρετή with its separate connotations of "the ability to do anything," "virtue" and "courage" contains the clue to the whole moral attitude of the Greeks. In Latin, the fact that "ante" means "in front" in space and "before" in time; while "post" means "behind" in space and "after" in time, contains the secret of the Roman attitude to time; that they themselves were travelling backwards into the future, with their faces towards the past, the Golden or Saturnian Age. This same idea was found in English, when "before" was commonly used to signify "in front of": but the substitution of "in front" indicates a change of attitude. "What is before us" now implies the future, not the past. While this type of thought-analysis can be encouraged by the master, examinations make it exterior to the curriculum; in the same way that they make the interrelation of the classical and modern languages exterior.

Boys find insufferable boredom in the classics as they are compelled to be taught; and it is small wonder. The speed at which they read is so slow that the original significance is lost. The historical purpose of Cæsar's Commentaries, their being an apologia for extraordinary powers, is forgotten in the labour of construing. That is the reason why it takes so long for boys to get the elements of grammar. Boredom retards. The object of learning is forgotten; or in most cases is unknown. Whereas, if interest could be sustained, grammar and syntax would come easily.

A fact or thought is meaningless without reference to some scheme of known things. To a boy, the centre of the world is himself. From that core radiate the school, the home, the country, the world of present to the outer circumference, the history of that world. His interest is not academic. He does not—unless he has an unhealthy fear of the present world—wish to lose himself in a scholarly rubbish dump. His instinct is to enter, not to retire from, the world. If he can be shown that what he is learning is relevant to himself and the world in which he lives, he will welcome it. The struggles of Clodius and Milo are dead, if turbulent history. But if he can see in them a similar situation to the conflict of Fascists and Communists, they take on new significance. Cæsar is dead, but his technique of dictatorship is modern. A constant reference from what is being taught to what is being lived; the rescue of the living truth from the debris of history, is the true salvage work of teaching. Knowledge itself is not academic. What is academic is the inability to perceive and utilize the significance of knowledge. Yet the schoolmaster with a live mind finds himself in constant conflict with and worsted by the academicism of examiners and the authorities above him. Truth is dynamic. As often as not, it disturbs and intoxicates. It is considered too dangerous for the growing boy. The authorities are afraid of it. So, instead of truth, the boy is fed with dry knowledge, a heavy, constipating diet of academicism, of unco-ordinated facts which will burden, not inflame him. They give him a sheet anchor, when what he wants is a kick in the pants.

Examinations deserve only part of the blame for this state of affairs. The fault is implicit in the whole system of education. It lies with dons, schoolmasters and the members of all academic bodies, who are themselves products of this system. It is aggravated by the fact that what was originally the entrance examination to London University has been extended by employers of labour to be the index of the educated man. But reform must come

from examiners. While sterile qualities are required, schools will supply them. There is a large number of schoolmasters, ready and keen to take advantage of any reform made in the system. The greater latitude, for example, allowed by Oxford Scholarship Examiners has already considerably modified the programme of preparation for that university in Classical and History Sixths. It is now possible for a boy who shows himself to have an active, discursive intelligence to win a scholarship. The majority nevertheless still go to those who work harder than they think. An example of which is a remark made to me by one of my schoolfellows up for a scholarship at Oxford. We were talking of the Greek dramatists and their respective merits. He plumped dogmatically for Æschylus ; and when I asked him why, he said, quite seriously, " He has such long words, so useful for verses." He won the first classical scholarship at Oriel.

The contempt in which knowledge is held to-day is due to this fact, that knowledge has been monopolised in schools, universities and elsewhere by academicists. They have made it a static, dead, useless thing. Contact with life has been lost. Learning has become a refuge, instead of an advance-post. Judged largely, education along these lines does more harm than good. It destroys spontaneous, intuitive life and erects in its place an intellectual shelter. There will be little hope for any but scholastic failures, until education is delivered from the tyranny of academicism. Nor will learning, before that time, rise to honour from its present position of contempt.

V

THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC AFFILIATIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

As I have said above, public schools exist to equip boys of the monied classes to maintain the present system. Many schools are heavily endowed and so have much to retain by the perpetuance of the capitalist system. Those which are not endowed, depend for income on fees which only a propertied class can afford to pay.* The interests of the public schools coincide with the vested interests of all those institutions sheltering under the capitalist system. This is the reason for the close alliance between the schools and the Conservative Party. This is why Liberal politics are sanctioned ; and Socialists and Communists banned. The first safeguards capital ; and the two latter threaten it. This also explains the religious basis of public schools. The huge vested interests of the Church are voluntarily supported by property holders, so long as they preach a capitalist morality and give the divine sanction to inequality.

I have attacked particular educational mistakes in the foregoing essays. But on a general examination, they prove not to be mistakes but part of a deliberate policy, based on the need to perpetuate a capitalist state at all costs. The cramping religious atmosphere, censorship of

* One well-known public school employs the whole of its endowment money in giving scholarships at a neighbouring grammar school, for the education of local boys. The school was founded for local education : but having risen in the social scale, it now uses this method of avoiding the original terms of its foundation. It is more profitable to sacrifice a large annual sum than to introduce elements that would lower the social tone and so the fees.

political ideas, the suppression of all that is finest and most alive in modern literature and the arts, even the sex tabu and the intolerance of all original and independent thought are necessary for the maintenance of the existent order. If one thing is challenged, all things will be challenged. The sterile curriculum must be preserved, because live knowledge is dynamic, and dynamitic. Relax discipline in any respect. Allow freedom to the personality in one direction and it will spread in every direction. Spreading, it will destroy what is false, evil and unjust. It will annihilate the public schools, the Church and the Capitalist State. What it will construct in their place, is of no interest to those bodies who will be overthrown. The general worth of the change is nothing to those who profit by inequality.

The authorities are right to be afraid. They are, from their point of view, wise to suppress, to thwart and deaden as long and fully as they can. If they adopted the measures which I have advocated above; if, that is, they made of education an illumination instead of a pair of academic blinkers, they would release a power that would destroy the economic basis on which they rest. It is therefore of vital importance in the name of reaction to preserve public schools against any quickening tendencies, against anything which might raise doubt in the coming generations of the propertied classes that they are not the salt of the earth, that it is not by divine right but by force that they hold their wealth, power or opportunities, and that their inherited prejudices are not the proper equipment of every educated man. It is necessary that the Church should co-operate even more energetically than formerly to inculcate those principles of keeping the poor always with—and below—us: and that the War Office should do its share by increasing instead of reducing the grant to O.T.C.'s for the training of a force that in uniform may be effective in war and will enrol itself unquestioningly in the Special Constabulary in the event of civil strife. Perhaps also black shirts should

be substituted for the grey and khaki ones of Cubs and Scouts.

"All this talk about the capitalistic basis of public schools," the fat men say impatiently, tossing back their doubles and straightening out their school ties, "it's just bunkum. Why, to-day, kids from board schools get scholarships to public schools, to universities even. All on our money. Every kid of talent has his chance. And then you talk about class education." While it is not true that every poor child of talent gets a good education, it is true that most of the cleverest working-class children get an opportunity for a bourgeois education. But rather than this being a benefit to the working class, it is a form of social insurance. If left in his working-class surroundings, he would be liable to become a danger to the existing system. Revolutionary leaders are made of such material. They have the ability to formulate the inarticulate feelings of their fellows and the will to attempt to remedy their conditions. The scholarship system is an excellent device for rendering them harmless. It is the same process as that applied so successfully to Mr. J. H. Thomas. The former Labour leader is now "Jimmy," the tame cat of society. He has been housetrained and can be trusted never to behave more indecorously than to mew occasionally. The process is applied to scholarship boys at an earlier age. They are laughed at for their accents, manners and dress. They are made ashamed of their parents, homes and antecedents. Then they are taught the golden doctrine, of rising in the world, of bettering themselves. They are only accepted in so far as they accord with their superiors and adopt their standards: until, by the end, there are very few who have not become tame cats, ready to aid the society which otherwise they would have done their utmost to subvert. It is an ingenious process, because it utilizes unconscious herd instinct and produces a feeling of gratitude in the very class whose corporate union it is its purpose and effect to destroy.

The greatest hope for education and for the public

schools is that more and more of them are being driven to seek State aid, and thus come under the province of the Board of Education. This has the effect of making the public schools slightly more public, a trifle more democratic in principle. It does not mean, however, that the public school formula is being changed in essence. It still preaches the gospel of the middle class. Get rich. Get secure. Keep things clean, or if not that, keep them as they are. The tendency is important, because it is creating a machine for taking over private education, rather than for any modification which it is introducing into education itself. I have no doubt in my own mind that the future of the public schools lies in this direction. A State affiliation would give the freedom from financial dependence on the capitalist system which is strangling private education. Finally, I am sure, whether as the result of revolution or tranquil development, the public schools (or at least their buildings) will become public schools. They will be incorporated into a system of State education, the purpose of which will be to equip citizens who will work in the interests of the world as a whole, instead of a reactionary guard trained to defend the interests of a particular portion of a particular community.

